'DECISION BACKED BY WHITE HOUSE' S-1 1-24-69

Pueblo Rescue Plea Said Vetoed

GARDEN CITY, N. Y. (AP) —The first decision not to send United States planes to the aid of the Pueblo was made by an Air Force general in Japan, the newspaper Newsday reported today.

In a copyright story by its chief Washington correspondent, Joseph Albright,

See Pueblo Story on Page 3

the newspaper said Lt. Gen. Seth J. McKee, then commander of the 5th Air Force in Japan, decided not to send jets for several reasons, including that "only a few American fighter planes were within range of Wonsan harbor and the North Korean air force was known to have several hundred MIG jets nearby."

THE REPORT said, "After a secret formal review of the decision, Defense Secretary (Robert S.) McNamara concluded that McKee had acted wisely. The three-star general has since been moved up to the role of assistant vice chief of the Air Force in the Pentagon."

Albright attributed his information to unnamed official and unofficial sources.

HE WROTE that distress signals from the Navy intelligence ship were relayed to Washington, but that McKee already was "in the process of deciding against sending the planes, in consultation with his superiors in Honolulu.

"President Johnson and his top advisers did nothing to reverse McKee's decision and by the time the facts of the incident were clear in Washington, there was hardly time to do anything before the Pueblo reached the mouth of Wonsan harbor," the story said. "President Johnson was depicted as having been extremely relieved that McKee had not 'started throwing bombs around' to rescue the Pueblo, because that would have resulted in a worse situation than her capture," it said.